GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
PANCHAYATI RAJ
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1425
ANSWERED ON:29.10.2008
EMPOWERMENT OF LOCAL BODIES THROUGH PRI
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Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government proposes to empower the local bodies through Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) in all the States;

(b) if so, the steps taken in this regard; and;

(c) the details of funds allocated to various States during the last three years and the current year?

Answer

MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ(SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR)

(a) & (b): As Panchayati Raj is a State subject, the Ministry has worked closely with States to develop and operationalize a national consensus on the measures to be taken to strengthen Panchayati Raj and ensure that Panchayats Raj Institutions (PRIs) function as institutions of self- government as envisaged in Part IX of the Constitution. Such a consensus, arrived at through detailed consultations with States through seven Round Tables of State Ministers of Panchayati Raj held between July and December 2004, touches upon the effective devolution of functions, finances and functionaries, planning, empowerment of Gram Sabhas, issues relating to reservation for SCs/STs and women, elections, maintenance of accounts and audit, Panchayats vis-Ã -vis parallel bodies, capacity building and training of elected representatives, preparation of a State of the Panchayats Report and work on Panchayati Raj jurisprudence. The consensus decisions are reviewed through a host of consultations, review meetings and intensive tours to States and Panchayats. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj regularly assesses the ground realities regarding the devolution of powers and responsibilities upon Panchayats through the institutional mechanism of meetings of the Council of State Ministers of Panchayati Raj, the Committee of Chief Secretaries of States and Panchayati Raj Secretaries and the Empowered Sub-Committee of National Development Council on Administrative and Financial Empowerment of the PRIs. State-specific road maps for devolution of powers and responsibilities to Panchayats have been arrived at following intensive tours by the Union Minister of Panchayati Raj. This road map, contained in a Statement of Conclusions jointly signed with the Chief Minister of the State concerned, highlights the key points of action on which the State would move to operationalize the recommendations of the Round Tables with a special focus on devolution of funds, functions and functionaries to Panchayats.

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj is also continuously and closely engaging with the Central Ministries administering the Centrally Sponsored Schemes to ensure that definite roles are assigned to Panchayats at all levels in implementing these schemes. The Ministry has also been holding workshops and conferences in collaboration with Planning Commission to ensure that Planning by all three levels of Panchayats becomes the core of district planning. The Backward Regions Grant Fund programme is implemented on the basis of participative plans prepared from the Grass roots level upwards by the Panchayats and the Municipalities, which are then consolidated by the District Planning Committee into the draft development plan of the district. The Ministry has also conceived of a Panchayat Empowerment and Accountability Incentive Scheme, which aims to provide incentives to States to empower Panchayats through the devolution of functions,funds and functionaries.

(c): The details of funds allocated to various States during the last three years and the current year are enclosed at Annex.